Exam Literacy: A Universal Approach to Exams

1) Breakdown the Exam Question

Command words are the words in the exam question that 'tell' students what to do in their answer (e.g. 'describe', 'explain' etc.).

- In practice papers and walking talking mock papers, command words must always be **circled.**

- In other exam prep resources, such as power points, command words must appear in **red**.

Compare the use of **diamond** with the use of **graphite**, **explaining** each use in terms of the **bonding** and **structure**. In your answer you should use information from the diagrams above.

(6)

Topic words are the words in the exam question that refer to **the topic** students should base their answer on (e.g. biological 'adaptations', 'themes' in a novel etc.)

- In practice papers and walking talking mock papers, topic words must always be **underlined.**

- In other exam prep resources, such as power points, topic words must appear in **blue.**

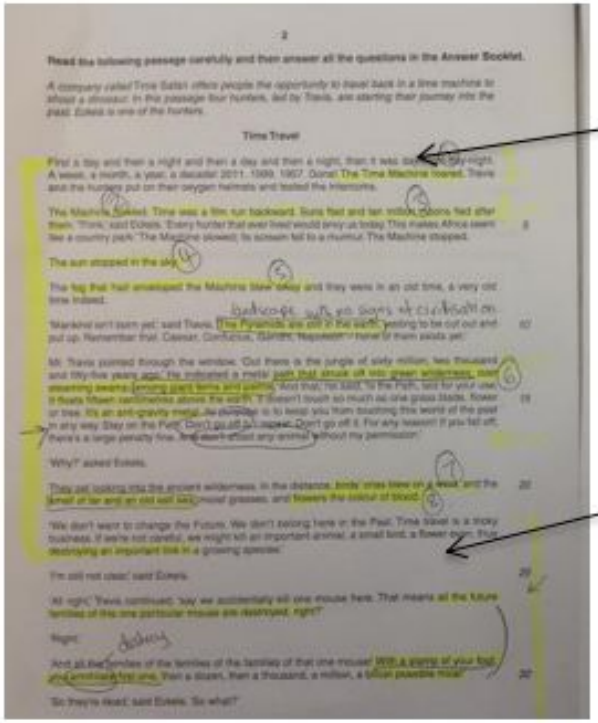
Refer to the number of **marks** given for the question.

- In practice papers, marks must always be **boxed**.

2) Finding Key Information from a Source or Extract

For higher-mark questions that require students to write extended responses, students should be encouraged to use strategies to **find key information, recall subject knowledge** and **create a plan** before writing out their response.

1. Finding key information in a source or text

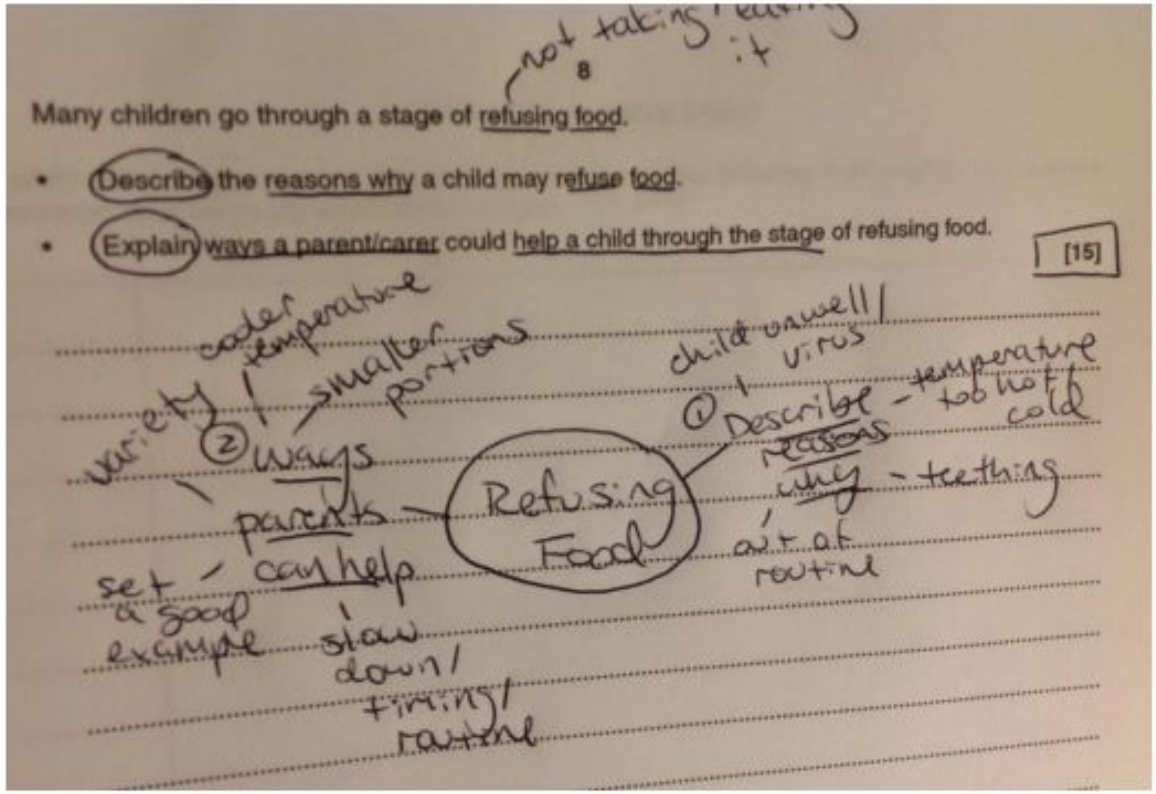


Students are allowed highlighters in an examination.
These should be used to pick out and identify information in any sources or texts that they will need to write an answer.

It's also helpful for students to use **numbers, arrows and notes** to help them organise the information they find.

3) Recalling Subject Knowledge by Creating a Plan

Encourage pupils to make some kind of a **plan** for an extended response **before** writing. This will help them to ensure they have recalled all of the necessary subject-specific knowledge and/or information from the text or source and organised it in a meaningful and logical way.



4) Producing a Response

Writing an answer is the final and last step in responding to an exam question. Students should be aware of and able to use a range of strategies to help them fully link their response to the question, express their ideas clearly and demonstrate subject-specific content knowledge.

1. Linking the written response to the question

In order to focus their answer clearly on the topic expressed in the exam question, students should try to **use the words from the question** to formulate **the first sentence** of their response.

Example question: **Describe** the **reasons why** a child may **refuse food**.

First sentence of answer:
*Firstly, **one reason that a child may refuse food is because** they may be teething and experiencing pain or discomfort in their mouth.*

5) Expressing Ideas Clearly

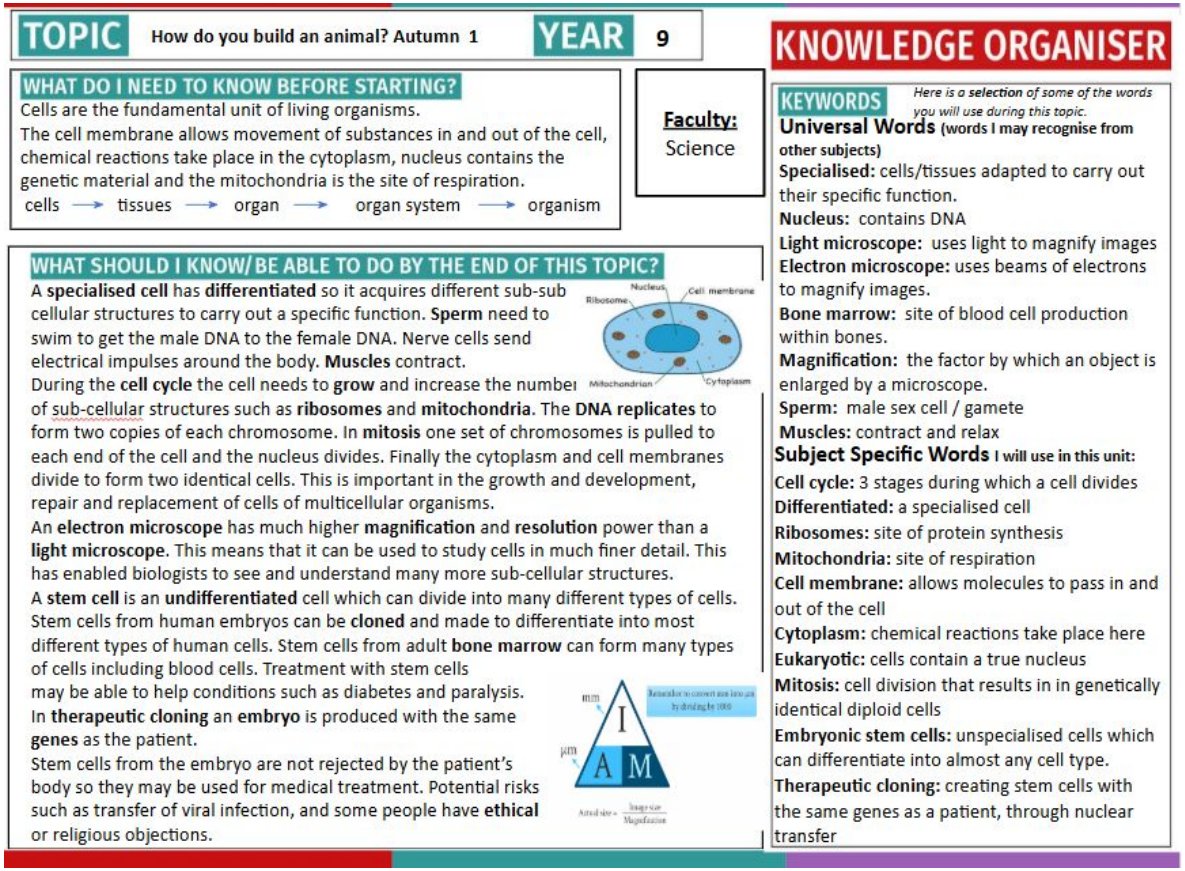
Students should be taught and encouraged to use **connectives** in longer written responses to exam questions in order to show a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of the information, content knowledge or ideas they are expressing.

Order/Sequencing of information/ideas:		
Firstly	*Secondly*	*Thirdly*
In addition	*Next*	*Additionally*
Subsequently	*Finally*	*Lastly*
To begin	*In conclusion*	
Links/Relationships between information/ideas:		
As a result	*Furthermore*	*Nevertheless*
Moreover	*Consequently*	*So*
For example	*Overall*	*Therefore*
Comparisons between information:		
Similarly	*Likewise*	*However*
In contrast	*Whereas*	*Alternatively*
In the same way	*On the other hand*	

6) How to Use Revision Tools

Finally, students should learn and memorise s**ubject-specific vocabulary** to use in their written answers on a range of possible topics, as it encourages pupils to give more in-depth and specific responses – leading to higher marks.

Use your knowledge organisers for this!



TOPIC How do you build an animal? Autumn 1 **YEAR** 9

KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW BEFORE STARTING?

Cells are the fundamental unit of living organisms.
The cell membrane allows movement of substances in and out of the cell, chemical reactions take place in the cytoplasm, nucleus contains the genetic material and the mitochondria is the site of respiration.
cells → tissues → organ → organ system → organism

Faculty: Science

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW/ BE ABLE TO DO BY THE END OF THIS TOPIC?

A **specialised cell** has **differentiated** so it acquires different sub-sub cellular structures to carry out a specific function. **Sperm** need to swim to get the male DNA to the female DNA. Nerve cells send electrical impulses around the body. **Muscles** contract.

During the **cell cycle** the cell needs to **grow** and increase the number of sub-cellular structures such as **ribosomes** and **mitochondria**. The **DNA replicates** to form two copies of each chromosome. In **mitosis** one set of chromosomes is pulled to each end of the cell and the nucleus divides. Finally the cytoplasm and cell membranes divide to form two identical cells. This is important in the growth and development, repair and replacement of cells of multicellular organisms.

An **electron microscope** has much higher **magnification** and **resolution** power than a **light microscope**. This means that it can be used to study cells in much finer detail. This has enabled biologists to see and understand many more sub-cellular structures.

A **stem cell** is an **undifferentiated** cell which can divide into many different types of cells. Stem cells from human embryos can be **cloned** and made to differentiate into most different types of human cells. Stem cells from adult **bone marrow** can form many types of cells including blood cells. Treatment with stem cells may be able to help conditions such as diabetes and paralysis.

In **therapeutic cloning** an **embryo** is produced with the same **genes** as the patient.

Stem cells from the embryo are not rejected by the patient's body so they may be used for medical treatment. Potential risks such as transfer of viral infection, and some people have **ethical** or religious objections.

KEYWORDS *Here is a selection of some of the words you will use during this topic.*

Universal Words (words I may recognise from other subjects)

Specialised: cells/tissues adapted to carry out their specific function.
Nucleus: contains DNA
Light microscope: uses light to magnify images
Electron microscope: uses beams of electrons to magnify images.
Bone marrow: site of blood cell production within bones.
Magnification: the factor by which an object is enlarged by a microscope.
Sperm: male sex cell / gamete
Muscles: contract and relax

Subject Specific Words I will use in this unit:

Cell cycle: 3 stages during which a cell divides
Differentiated: a specialised cell
Ribosomes: site of protein synthesis
Mitochondria: site of respiration
Cell membrane: allows molecules to pass in and out of the cell
Cytoplasm: chemical reactions take place here
Eukaryotic: cells contain a true nucleus
Mitosis: cell division that results in in genetically identical diploid cells
Embryonic stem cells: unspecialised cells which can differentiate into almost any cell type.
Therapeutic cloning: creating stem cells with the same genes as a patient, through nuclear transfer